

Sample Equal Pay Op Ed 2013

Today, **Tuesday, April 9**, is the national observance of Equal Pay Day—the point in the year when a woman’s wages catch up to a man’s wages in the previous year. According to the latest US Census statistics, women are paid, on average, 77 cents for every dollar their male counterparts are paid—a gap of 23 cents.

Nationally, year-round, full-time working women earn 77 cents for every dollar men earn. In Kentucky, women earn, on average the same as the national average, 77 cents. African Americans in Kentucky are paid just 72 cents for every dollar paid to all men, and Latinas fare worse, earning just 58 cents for every dollar men earn.

According to the National Partnership for Women and Families, as a group, full-time working women in Kentucky lose approximately \$5,190,060,319 each year due to the wage gap. Furthermore, the women of our state are increasingly responsible for the economic security of their families—215,981 households in Kentucky are headed by women and 38% live below the poverty line.

Although the wage gap has narrowed overall during the past five decades, it has stagnated around 77 cents nationally for almost a decade. As more and more families become more reliant upon women’s paychecks for livelihood, we must address the wage gap for the sake of families and their financial stability.

First, Congress must pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. Federal legislation is a viable way to address the persistent gap between men’s and women’s wages. The Paycheck Fairness Act will strengthen the Equal Pay Act by closing loopholes and strengthening penalties to guarantee that women workers are not shortchanged solely because of their gender. Call and/or write our Senators or *[Insert the name of your Congressman]* and urge them to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act.

Second, businesses must examine and correct their pay practices. The Business and Professional Women’s Foundation has developed an Employer Equity Self-Audit that encourages employers to recognize and reward the skills contributions of working women. To get a copy please visit www.bpwfoundation.org.

Third, women must stand up for themselves. If a prospective employer cannot show that woman and men are paid equally for the job you’re seeking, it makes sense to look elsewhere. Positive signs include a hiring process that seeks diversity through affirmative action, written pay and benefit policies, job descriptions and evaluation procedures.

With more women in the workforce and acting as their family’s breadwinners, it’s more important than ever in this economic recovery that we are all mindful of the wage gap and adequately address it through policy, business practice and as women, our own negotiation efforts.

(Your name and title, organization name, or occupation)